

EXHIBIT A

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'A lot of these people can't even spell Swedenborgian, let alone know what it means.'

GEORGE CHAPIN, church stalwart

A tiny church, a pot of gold, an ex-con spark a bitter feud

By Kevin Cullen
GLOBE STAFF

There are many places you would expect to find a South Boston hoodlum like Eddie MacKenzie on a Sunday morning, but the pulpit of the Swedenborgian Church on Beacon Hill is not one of them.

Still, there he was one recent Sunday, standing before the congregation, championing the right of this 186-year-old church to secede from the national organization of this tiny Christian sect.

"There is a renewed spirit of freedom and independence in our church," MacKenzie told the 50 or so worshipers. "We need to truly believe we are God's disciples. . . . We are filled with a revolutionary energy and spirit."

As if on cue, the choir broke into "Yankee Doodle Dandy."

Not that everyone in the pews felt like singing along. George Chapin, a church stalwart for half a century, remembers watching MacKenzie, dumbfounded, and thinking, "What the hell is going on

here?"

Edward J. MacKenzie Jr. is a man of parts — many parts.

A convicted drug dealer, he is the author of a maim-and-tell memoir about his years as a legbreaker for South Boston gangland leader Whitey Bulger.

He has been, as he describes himself, a man almost irresistibly drawn to cons and scams. He recently admitted to filing phony worker's compensation claims and is awaiting trial on charges of swindling \$200,000 from an elderly woman. And he faces charges in another court that he threatened to kill his ex-wife by chaining a cinderblock to her leg and throwing her off a bridge.

He is, in short, a busy man.

But he finds time for church. Indeed, within months of joining, he became part of a new leadership circle that is shaking the rafters at Boston's Swedenborgian church — and raising doubts among some about how the church's wealth is being spent.

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GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/JOHN TLUMACKI

Eddie MacKenzie (left) with the Rev. G. Steven Ellis at the New Jerusalem Church on Bowdoin Street.

On Beacon Hill, a church divided

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Upfront about his prolific rap sheet, MacKenzie has won an ally in the church's longtime pastor, the Rev. G. Steven Ellis, who sees him as a man who turned his back on crime, a sinner seeking spiritual sanctuary. Ellis, a Bible scholar who has been pastor of the Boston church for 22 years, has sided with MacKenzie against church elders, who are skeptical of MacKenzie's conversion and worried about his motives.

Ellis did more than take MacKenzie's side. He nominated him for church treasurer, pushing aside his own mother-in-law.

And so in September, MacKenzie took office. It seemed like a very auspicious move.

For while the Bowdoin Street church is poor in numbers, it is rich by any other measure — and may soon become much richer. The church owns an 18-story apartment building above its chapel that churns out more than \$1 million a year in clear profit, according to an October audit by the church's accountant. And a plan has been floated in Boston real estate circles to convert the building to condominiums, a move that the church estimates could yield as much as \$75 million.

The new leaders say they are trying to reenergize a moribund institution, to recruit new members and more aggressively manage church assets. There are already indications, beyond the possible conversion of the building, of a more freewheeling approach to church finances.

The church trustees recently voted to make a \$350,000 loan to one of the new church leaders — a loan authorized but apparently not used. A lump sum of \$850,000 has been transferred to a real estate company in which MacKenzie and another church leader were founding officers. And church bylaws have been changed to make it easier to sell church property and to remove a ban on church leaders profiting from such sales.

They are the kinds of changes that deeply unsettled some longtime church members, changes that led the national church to file a civil racketeering lawsuit against the new leadership March 2 in US District Court.

The suit claims the new leaders "have utilized a pattern of racketeering activity to wrongfully take control of a 185-year-old church to obtain dominion over its \$30 million apartment house, which now generates more than \$1.2 million in annual income." The suit seeks to void the memberships of more than 40 people who joined the church in the last two years, and to transfer the church's assets to the national organization.

"MacKenzie is a criminal," the suit alleges. "He has infiltrated the Church only to access its resources for his own personal benefit."

Chapin, one of the plaintiffs, said many of the new members were rushed into the church, without proper training in Swedenborgianism, to rubberstamp the self-serving agenda of the new leadership.

"A lot of these people can't even spell Swedenborgian, let alone know what it means," he said.

Christine LaTarte, the vice president of the national Swedenborgian organization, says her group authorized the Boston law firm of Holland & Knight to file the suit "to protect not just the assets of the Boston church, but the history and the legacy and the purpose behind the establishment of this church."

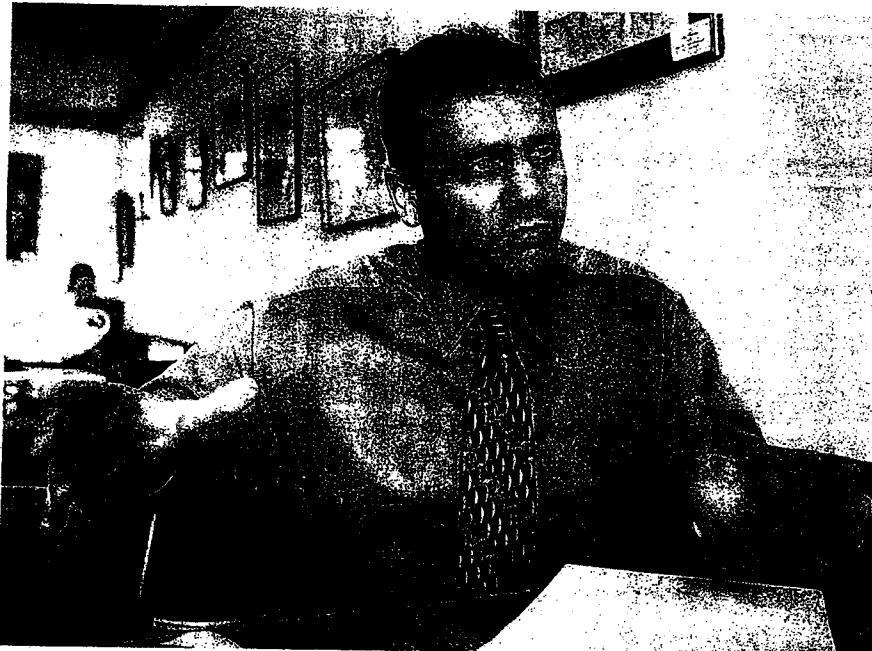
"What's happened in Boston is a shame," she said.

The Boston church's lawyer, Gerald P. Hendrick of Edwards & Angell, calls the lawsuit meritless, while MacKenzie and other church leaders dismiss it as sour grapes.

"Some of these older members appear to have an ax to grind," Hendrick said.

Word that a man of MacKenzie's reputation would have a hand in deciding how the church spends its wealth had also filtered to the office of Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly. And almost as soon as Reilly's investigators began snooping around the church last November, demanding its financial records, MacKenzie stepped down as treasurer. He is now the church's chief of operations.

With hissing eyes and what-merry disposition, 45-year-old Eddie MacKenzie seems serene as he contemplates the maelstrom he helped create. He says he'll beat the rap in his upcoming trials. His accusers are lying, he says, and besides, he's got religion. When he was a young thug, selling coke on street corners and roughing up rivals, his horizon stretched no farther than Winter Hill in Somerville, where Irish plug-uglies plotted mayhem and formed a gang named after the hill, a gang whose boss was Wherry Bulger. Now MacKenzie sits in a church on Beacon Hill, a new man.



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/JOHN TUMACZ

A QUESTIONED LEADER

Former South Boston mob foot soldier Eddie MacKenzie says he was first attracted to Beacon Hill's Swedenborgian church when a friend told him that it paid college tuition for members' children. Now, as a church leader, he insists he has nothing but good intentions for the institution, although he adds that he understands how some people would think ill of him. "For some people, I'm always going to be a scumbag," he says.

"I love this church," he says. "I've kind of found my niche."

The Church on the Hill

Boston's Swedenborgian church, known legally as the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem, known colloquially as the Church on the Hill, is named for the 18th-century Swedish scientist and philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg, who believed that Jesus Christ had already made a second coming. In spirit rather than person, God, decide their own afterlife.

"The church is within man," he wrote. Swedenborg died in 1772, at the age of 84, and the first group of Swedenborgians organized themselves in London 15 years later. By the early 1800s, churches were sprouting up in the United States.

The church spread rapidly in an era of spiritual and intellectual awakening. It was at the forefront of what today would be called progressive thinking. In the mid-19th century, the church advocated for co-education. In the 1920s, one of its most prominent members, Helen Keller, led the fight for rights for the disabled. Today, the movement is greatly diminished, though there are affiliated churches in more than 30 countries. There are five Swedenborgian congregations in Massachusetts. Officials at the national office in Newton say there are about 1,500 active Swedenborgians nationwide, down from 2,600 a decade ago.

The Boston congregation, founded in 1818 by a group of Harvard students and alumni, is the fourth oldest, and became what Marguerite Block, a church historian, called "the real center of the New Church" in America. New England has long occupied a special place in the church's history, in part because some of the region's leading intellectuals, from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Henry James, were influenced by Swedenborg's writings. Among the region's most famous Swedenborgians were the poet Robert Frost and a Leominster native named John Chapman, better known as Johnny Appleseed.

Swedenborg's unorthodox analysis of the Bible was denounced as heresy by some mainstream Christians, but it quickly won adherents. Among the tenets of Swedenborgianism is that believers, not God, decide their own afterlife.

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The church has been defamed," Ellis wrote in his letter of resignation to the national group. "I have been treated worse than a criminal."

At Ellis's prompting, and with MacKenzie's and Kennedy's active lobbying of church members, the church abruptly severed ties with the national organization to which it had been bound since its founding, and quit the state association with which it had been affiliated since 1835.

MacKenzie says the critics of the new church leadership badly miscalculated the membership's loyalty to Ellis.

"They attacked Steve's integrity when

they should have attacked me and Tom

Kennedy," MacKenzie said. "No one com-

plained when I came into the church and

was just serving food or cleaning up. Once

they found out I was running for treasur-

er, I became a lightning rod. It's OK to throw someone under me a bone, but not with any meat on it."

Liberalized from the oversight of the na-

tional and state associations, Ellis, Kenne-

dy, and MacKenzie set about reorganizing

their church from what Ellis described in

an interview as "outside enemies."

Under a new set of church bylaws

drawn up in November, it became much

easier and much faster, for new members

to join. Ellis was given complete discre-

tion in deciding who would be confrmed

and how. Newcomers can now be ad-

mitted by a simple majority vote of exist-

ing church members, before a two-thirds

vote was required. Required doctrinal

training, emphasizing Swedenborg's writ-

ings, was eliminated.

God, too, was a provision that any

sale or church property be approved by

two-thirds of members, and one that bar-

red individuals from enriching them-

selves with church assets. A new provi-

sion calls for the expulsion of mem-

bers deemed unworthy by a simple ma-

jority.

That would be Eddie MacKenzie.

He says he knows very well what his

critics think: that he and a band of cronies

are pocketing cash, spending it freely,

squandering it away in new accounts. It is

baseless and insulting talk, he says.

"You can't take money here. There are

systems in place. I didn't steal money

here even if I wanted to," he says, hesita-

ting slightly before adding, "and I don't

want to."

He preys on people.

So how did the New Church and Mac-

Kenzie, Swedenborg's and Southie's own,

come together?

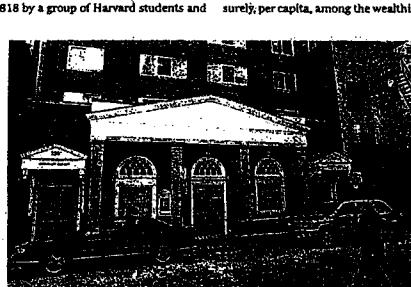
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ition to members' children.

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VALUABLE ASSET
The church, known officially as the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem, sits beneath an 18-story apartment building on Bowdoin Street that churns out more than \$1 million a year in profit. The new church board is considering selling the building.

"My integrity and service to the

Continued from preceding page

tion for members' children. But he says his goal now is to put the church's wealth to work for the disadvantaged, not himself. He said it is doing so well financially, between book sales and what he said is a soon-to-be-finalized movie deal, that he may not even need to ask the church to pay for the college educations of his five daughters.

MacKenzie says he has not read much of Swedenborg but had read enough to appreciate his "genius." He says it was Ellis's charismatic sermons that captured his imagination.

"It was more about him talking about Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett than Emanuel Swedenborg," he said of Ellis's proselytizing.

Ellis says his great-great-great-grandfather was a close friend of Boone's.

MacKenzie says he did not hide his past from Ellis or anyone else he met at the church.

Ellis bought 50 copies of his book and gave them to church members.

The book, "Street Soldier: My Life as an Enforcer for Whitey Bulger and the Boston Irish Mob," is an account of MacKenzie's disadvantaged childhood and life of crime. In it, he gleefully describes the pleasure he took in mayhem, including swallowing a finger he bit off an adversary. Some critics have called the book a wildly embellished tale of his role in Whitley's world.

MacKenzie's book is also frank about how hard he has found it to leave behind his criminal life.

"Crime is a way of life, an addiction," he writes.

In the final chapter, he observes: "Every day I face a choice: continue to change or fall back to the comfortable, darker ways of my predator side. Too often I retreat to scams and doing 'collections' for people. The money is good and easy, and the accompanying rush of adrenaline is probably closer to what one gets in closing a legitimate business deal."

When asked whether she believes her former husband has changed his ways, Carla MacKenzie laughs ruefully before answering.

"There is no redemption in this story," she says. "I don't think Eddie could change even if he wanted to. . . . Preys on people with good hearts and takes them for what they are worth. I went through seven years of hell and therapy. I feel sorry for those people at that church."

In a criminal complaint for which Eddie MacKenzie is awaiting trial in Boston Municipal Court, Carla said that on Dec. 23, 2002, a month after he was accepted as a member of the church, Eddie called her after finding out she was a witness against him in a worker's compensation fraud case. According to the complaint, she told police that he "swore on his little life that he would kill her if she ever testified against him." Specifically, she said, he would have her "legs chained to a cinder block and have her thrown over a bridge."

MacKenzie says that his former wife is lying, and that she has a pathological desire to destroy him.

Though he vigorously defends his honor in the pending cases, MacKenzie says

he understands why some people would think ill of him.

"For some people, I'm always going to be a scumbag," he says. "There's nothing I can do about that."

Ellis, for his part, sees MacKenzie as bringing just the sort of new blood the church needs. Unlike some of those now complaining about the new direction of the church, he said, MacKenzie has not missed a service since joining.

The disgruntled people said: "We need doctors and lawyers and professionals. We don't need bums." Well, I found that under the bum stuff were some brilliant people," Ellis says.

MacKenzie also sees snobbery behind the complaints.

"There are about six or seven families who are complaining," he says. "This church was the best kept secret on Beacon Hill. These people were taking care of their families and their relatives not the church. . . . We've opened up the church, and we're going to continue to open it up."

Certainly, the new regime has brought many new members. Church records show that at least 45 of its 105 members joined the church over the past two years, 28 of them in just the past year. MacKenzie said he's brought in about 10 friends and relatives.

Ellis says that shows an open-door policy. Disgruntled members say the new regime stoked the pond with loyalty.

Ellis, meanwhile, says he is not troubled by MacKenzie's notorious past.

"Paul," the minister said, "was a murderer" before he became a saint.

Other Swedenborgians are more skeptical. The Rev. Lee Woofenden, pastor of a Swedenborgian church in Bridgewater, says he read MacKenzie's book and was disturbed.

"I'm a minister, and I believe in redemption," Woofenden says. "I believe people can reform. But I'm also a pragmatic person, and I don't believe that you take people who have been convicted of wrongdoing and put them in charge of your church. I think the Boston church has acted irresponsibly by putting a convicted felon in such a position of authority."

Financial maneuvers

Whether it is bold leadership, or, as the lawsuit alleges, some sort of self-serving conspiracy, the new power brokers at the church have been hard at work.

Late last year, John B. Burke, who replaced MacKenzie as treasurer Dec. 6, just a month after becoming a church member, began approaching property developers, asking if they were interested in converting the apartment building into condominiums.

Burke is the former co-owner of a South Boston nightclub who now works at a real estate firm on Cape Cod. In the early 1990s, he unsuccessfully tried to open an upscale strip club in the Combat Zone.

A Boston College graduate, he was an enthusiastic convert to Swedenborgianism. Upon being accepted as a member of the church in November he asked to be baptized in the Charles River.

And he is bringing his business smarts to bear on church finances. One property developer who saw the church's proposal Burke was circulating among potential investors, and who asked not to be identified, told the Globe, "They are looking for the capital and the ability to convert it."

The developer said the church's proposal estimated that, depending on the



IT MAKES NO SENSE

John Perry (with his wife, Anne), a lifelong member of the church who was voted off its board last year, says the sudden change in leadership was rash. "It makes no sense, but it makes cents, as in dollars and cents," he says.

and the moving of large sums of money, was rash.

"It makes no sense, but it makes cents, as in dollars and cents," says Perry, who is suspicious of the new leaders.

The future

The attorney general is looking over their shoulder. Their aristotle co-religionists have sued them. But the new leaders say they are undaunted as they reconfigure their obscure church into what they hope is a bigger presence in the city.

On Feb. 8, about 50 people gathered at the church for the 310th birthday of Emanuel Swedenborg. They listened as a Croatian minister for a different Swedenborg sect described how when he took over a church in Pennsylvania years ago, the congregation was fighting among itself. The older members thought they had the right to dictate to the younger ones. Sitting in a chair behind the visiting preacher, Steve Ellis closed his eyes and nodded.

"Praise God," Ellis said.

After the service, the congregation, many of them elderly, a few of them children, moved upstairs and took their seats on long tables with paper tablecloths and plastic cups of juice and soda to watch a play about Swedenborg's correspondence with the Queen of Sweden. Two actors in period costumes traded bon mots, a performance that was greeted with a mixture of smiles and seeming bewilderment from the audience.

"Most of these people are poor," Eddie MacKenzie said, surveying the room from the back, his arms folded.

He says these people are getting better food, better treatment, more respect; than they did under the old regime. There are more field trips. He's started a senior luncheon.

MacKenzie's got plans, big plans. He envisions the church putting on more theatrical performances for a wider public. He likes the idea of the church sponsoring youth athletic teams.

"Why not a team from Southie and a team from Roxbury, wearing uniforms with the church's name on them?" he asks.

All this costs money, but as Eddie MacKenzie says, "We've got the money."

History of the church

1688 — Emanuel Swedenborg born in Stockholm, Sweden.

1745 — Swedenborg says God appeared to him and told him a human was needed to serve as the means by which God would reveal himself to mankind. Thus began Swedenborg's spiritual life.

1749 — Swedenborg publishes his first theological work, anonymously, called "Heavenly Secrets."

1772 — Swedenborg dies.

1787 — Fifteen years after Swedenborg's death, a group of 11 followers in London form the Church of the New Jerusalem based on his theological works.

1817 — The first New Jerusalem church in the United States is founded in Pennsylvania. It becomes the Swedenborgian Church of North America.

1838 — A Boston congregation of the church is founded by a group of Harvard University students and alumni. It becomes the fourth American congregation.

1844 — The Boston congregation builds its first major church, on Bowdoin Street atop Beacon Hill, with seating for 1,000.

1866 — With membership dwindling, the Bowdoin Street church is torn down and replaced by an apartment building over a smaller chapel with seating for 100.

